THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI SUBBULAKSHMI JAGADEESAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) According to the report of National Sample Survey Organisation for the year 1999-2000, the population of backward classes is as under:—

| Area | OBC population |
|---|---|
| Rural | 37.4% |
| Urban | 31.4% |

As per Mandal Commission's Report, the total backward classes population was 52.1% as per census conducted in 1931.

(c) No, Sir.

**Inter-caste marriages**

690. SHRI PENUMALLI MADHU: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that recently Supreme Court has directed the administration and police throughout the country to protect the couples doing inter-caste marriages from harassment and violence;

(b) if so, the role of the Ministry in promoting inter-caste marriages; and

(c) the schemes available to guard the interest of couples of inter-caste marriages?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI SUBBULAKSHMI JAGADEESAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Under the Centrally sponsored scheme for implementation of provisions of the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 and the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, due Central assistance is provided to State Governments and Union Territory Administrations. The scheme also covers provisions of incentive to couples of inter-caste marriages.